

SEA LETTER OF THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM, SAN FRANCISCO

Winter 1983
Number 34

A quarterly publication of the National Maritime Museum Association and the National Park Service

In Command of the Chinese Bark *Chin Pu*: Swiftling the Rigging on Christmas Morning

by Capt. Fred Klebingat



The *Chin Pu* in her younger years. This photograph, made in Amsterdam harbor in the early 1880's, shows the vessel port-painted and under her original name, *Amstel*.

— Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

By 1925, the year my story begins, the era of sail had lasted many thousands of years. Sail was discovered when primitive man found that his dug-out could be moved before the wind by using a mat, or perhaps even before that by spreading an animal skin. In due course, the Phoenicians circum-navigated Africa in much improved sailing ships and later the Polynesians with their catamarans and mat sails discovered the islands of the great Pacific and settled them.

European seamen in their windships ventured forth and found distant oceans. They discovered two great continents and transported the first settlers. Steam, when it came, did not have an easy time in ousting sail. The windships improved and

culminated in the American clipper ships,¹ the British tea and wool clippers, and finally in the steel "nitrate clippers" — those of A.D. Bordes of Dunkerque and the great German Flying P Line. They battled their way westward against the Cape Horn gales to load nitrates at open roadsteads along the Chilean province of Tarapaca. The Flying P liners were so well handled that they virtually kept a schedule — not easy to do when you don't have an engine. I saw their mighty *Preussen*², square-rigged on all five masts, slip into Iquique under sail in 1905 — a sight never to be forgotten. Eight days later she was loaded and gone. The last sailing ship built for the Flying P Line, *Padua*, a steel four-masted bark, was launched in 1926.



Melrose, 615 tons, built 1902 in Hoquiam, Washington, by Hitchings & Joyce. (All photos are from the collections of the National Maritime Museum except where otherwise credited.)

It was now 1925. I was employed by Dr. Joseph Oliver of San Francisco, a physician and surgeon who had put away his scalpels and turned to the sea. He was known up and down California Street as Dr. Oliver, the managing owner of several sailing ships. I had just brought his *Melrose*, a four-masted schooner, back from the South Seas where we had delivered the largest cargo of lumber she had ever carried. Nevertheless, she lost money. Not much, but some. Dr. Oliver saw the handwriting on the wall — the era of sail was drawing to a close. He sold the ship. It was insurance that ate up the profits as much as anything. Dr. Oliver could get

insurance, but the broker was not particularly anxious to do business:

"You see that chart on the wall, doctor? See those red dots all over the Pacific? Well, each one

¹ Not to mention the "down-Easters," the New England-built square-riggers that followed the clippers; larger vessels for the most part and far more numerous. I will come to one of them, the *Santa Clara*, in this narrative.

² "The *Preussen* was without a doubt the greatest sailing-ship the world has seen." — Alan Villiers, *The Way of a Ship*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953. A large-scale model of the *Preussen* by Eric Swanson greets the visitor entering the front doors of the Museum.

of those is the wreck of an American schooner. We'll write you a policy, but it's only because you're an old customer . . ."

With the sale of the ship all this had ended. The *Melrose*, along with the other West Coast built ships populating the mudflats of Oakland Creek, would never crowd on canvas again. No more would the trade routes of the Pacific be criss-crossed with wooden schooners and barkentines carrying their high deckloads of lumber — vessels built in Puget Sound, Grays Harbor, Eureka and San Francisco. Until the 1920's they were a common sight bound for ports in the Orient, the South Seas, New Zealand and Australia while others were destined for the harbors and roadsteads of Chile and Peru. A number rounded Cape Horn on the way to South Africa.

There was no time for regrets — I was out of a job. I had to look for a berth in steam. But jobs were hard to find in San Francisco. It was the headquarters for all the steamship companies and that was fine if you were a company man. If you weren't you had to cool your heels in the outer office and be super-nice to some measly clerk. I was a company man all right, but it was a sailing ship company that had gone out of business. Dr. Oliver had been managing owner for a number of investors, including himself, in the schooners *Melrose*, *Prosper*, *Oceania Vance* and *A. F. Coats* well into the 1920's. The shares in a schooner were divided into 64ths; that was the way it was always done. I had bought into the *Melrose*; I owned 1/16th of her. I should have bought General Motors.

I found myself in increasingly straitened circumstances.

"Why not go to San Pedro, Fred?" a friend said to me on the City Front one day. "There are all kinds of jobs down there."

"There are? It's pretty dead around here. Particularly for a windjammer captain."

"Sure," he continued, "you might land a job as mate in an intercoastal ship or in a steam schooner, or get a job as a skipper in a big yacht — there is a lot of money down there and a lot of yachts. You could go as a "paper captain" and navigator in a tuna boat.³ Also for a man like you with sailing ship papers there are jobs in the movie ships.⁴ All you have to do is sit in the Mission Smoke House and the job will come to you."

I made up my mind to go to San Pedro to keep from starving.

There was one other way to get a seagoing berth in San Francisco besides hanging around steamship offices. This was through a waterfront tailor shop. News and gossip travel fast in San Francisco and nowhere more so than on the City Front.

"Fred wants to go to San Pedro."

So it came to pass that as I was walking past Abraham's clothing store, one of the owners sees me and comes running out: "I hear you want to go to San Pedro. I've got a berth for you — the Hammond steam schooner *Astoria* has a job going as relief third mate."

I thanked him. Just what I needed. "But you will have to go by way of Grays Harbor," he went on. "The chief mate is stepping off to get his San Francisco pilot's endorsement." (As it happened, I was shipmates with this man in later years. We called him "Sour Puss" Anderson.)

"That's all right," I said, "I'll take the job anyway." So I joined my first steam schooner and took my first job as a mate on a steamer's bridge.

In San Pedro the Mission Smoke House had taken its name from a large cigar stand outside the premises that had until a few years before been a saloon. The place was partly owned by a former mate in coastwise ships. Most seafaring men bought their sea stock of tobacco here. But Prohibition — the "Noble Experiment" as President Hoover chose to call this period in our history — had not dealt kindly with the former saloon. It became a pool hall. Nevertheless, there were chairs for visitors hospitably placed along one wall and a bar that served something called "Near Beer" and Angostura Bitters. Of course, these drinks were only for those

³ American fish boats must be owned by American citizens but most of the people engaged in the tuna business were aliens. So they registered their infant children as owners, children born in the United States. But the children were obviously too young to enter and clear a fishing boat for the open sea, therefore the need for a "paper captain." Of course, in this case he would also have to be a navigator. There were the Portugese fishing boat owners in San Diego, most born in the island of Madeira. There were the Yugoslavs and the Japanese in San Pedro. The Japanese were probably the best to work for: "You tend to your navigation," they would say, "We'll do the fishing." You did not even have to eat Japanese food. A special fare was cooked for you.

⁴ For the larger movie ships they had to hire a man with papers that certified him as Master of Sailing Ships of over 700 gross tons.

innocents who had not been able to locate a speak-easy or bootlegger. Although mostly alcohol, Angostura was rated as a medicine. It therefore had the virtue of being legal.

The Mission Smoke House was a large establishment. It went right through a space between Front and Beacon Street with a door on either thoroughfare. I found that what I had been told about this place was true. Sitting in a chair at the Mission Smoke House, I did land a job as third mate in the *Melville Dollar*, a steamer of 7,000 tons engaged in the intercoastal trade. I found Alexander Beatty aboard as second mate; he was a veteran Pacific Coast sailing ship master who had started out as a hunter in the sealing schooners. Just a few years before, the barkentine he commanded, the big *Katherine Mackall*, had passed my *Melrose* one Sunday afternoon near Vauvau in the southeast



ABOVE: The *Melville Dollar*, 7032 tons, built 1921 in Shanghai by Kiangnan DK & Eng. Wks.

BELOW: *Katherine Mackall*, 2262 tons, built 1919 in Wilmington, California by R. J. Chandler & Co.



trades. Times had changed — we were both glad to get a berth in the steamship.

After this voyage and return to San Pedro, Billy Maggio, vice president of the C. J. Hendry Company, a large firm of ship chandlers, offered me a job as captain of his tuna clipper *Hermosa*. Maggio didn't need a paper captain; he needed a real fishing boat skipper. I turned it down. "I would take it, Mr. Maggio," I said, "if I was a fisherman. But I don't know tuna fishing or any other kind of fishing. Thanks for your offer, though."

Then I was lucky. Because I had the right sailing ship license, I got a job as master of the ship *Santa Clara* in a picture called *Evangeline* starring Dolores Del Rio. The *Santa Clara* was a fine old wooden square-rigger, a veteran of the Cape Horn trade — ten times around Cape Stiff to San Francisco before the turn of the century. At one time the famous David Rivers, later of the *A.G. Ropes*, was her master.⁵ I knew her subsequently as part of the Alaska Packers fleet in Oakland Creek — she sailed to Alaska each spring with fishermen and cannery hands until the early 1920's. But you wouldn't recognize her now — although the original ship was inside, she had been encased with a replica of Lord Nelson's ship-of-the-line *Victory*. This was for a previous film about the British admiral and his paramour, Lady Hamilton, called *The Divine Lady*.

The *Victory* was the most spectacular movie ship ever created, a three-decker⁶ — and very well done, too. Row after row of wooden cannons that looked exactly like cast iron, each lined with a length of steel oilwell casing so it could be fired, and all of them triggered by electricity. Elaborate decorations done in papier-mache in imitation of the original carvings — and you couldn't tell the difference. The *Evangeline* film needed a British

⁵ Captain Rivers' sea letters describing the maintenance and discipline aboard the down-Easter *A.G. Ropes* can be found in Frederick C. Matthews' *American Merchant Ships, 1850-1900*, Salem, Mass., Marine Research Society, 1930.

⁶ Another old down-Easter famous on this coast was the *Llewellyn J. Morse*, also a Cape-Horner in her day. A few years before the *Santa Clara* was made into the *Victory*, the *Morse* had been rebuilt as "Old Ironsides" for the picture of the same name with Wallace Beery, but "Old Ironsides" was only a frigate, a two-decked man-of-war.

My old barkentine, the *S. N. Castle* (where I had swifted the foremast rigging), played two roles in this picture. She was first made over into a smaller frigate, the *Algiers*, belonging to the Barbary Coast pirates. Then her end came during the Tripoli Harbor scenes at Catalina Island when she was burned in the role of the *Philadelphia*, which was set afire in an historic raid by Stephen Decatur in 1804.



The stern of the old down-Easter *Santa Clara* can be seen inside the replica of Lord Nelson's *Victory* that has been built around her for the motion picture *The Divine Lady*. After further use in *Evangeline*, when Captain Klebingat commanded her, this impressive movie ship was laid up. Dismantling has begun at the stern.

The vessel alongside her is the *Redoubtable*, a movie ship built on the hull of the well-known Alaska Packers barkentine, formerly full-rigged ship, *Centennial* (built 1875 in East Boston), whose figurehead is on display on the second floor of the museum. The *Centennial*'s round trip to Australia, ending in 1928, was the last commercial voyage ever made by one of these old New England-built wooden square-riggers.

The small schooner on the outside, *Lily*, was later rebuilt as HMS *Bounty*.

man-of-war too, so *Santa Clara*'s guise as *Victory* was unchanged.

My task was simple — to motor the ship (engines had been installed and tugs were in attendance) down the coast a ways to the "location" where they were shooting the film, a little north of Newport. Then I went down to my cabin and read the *Saturday Evening Post*. If there were evolutions

involving sail, it was all handled by the Movie Riggers union. I didn't have to go on deck and they didn't want me. It was the best job I ever had.

The trouble was it only lasted a few months.

The "golden age of yachting" had not quite passed at this time — the end of the twenties — and so I decided there was a future for me there, in the big sailing yachts. For a decade I worked for east

coast capitalists, men with unlimited capital; some of them kept their yachts on the Pacific coast. They hired men to run their office and take care of their investments; they hired someone to take care of their polo ponies, others to run their estates, someone to run their household, and a skipper to run their yachts. The captain was the boss. He hired his own crew, he took care of the boat and he paid the bills. It suited me just fine.

I was working for a man who liked me to take him and his friends on long voyages. Still there was quite a bit of idle time between these extended trips to the South Seas. I became interested in books, rare books on the exploration of the Pacific by others who had travelled there. I compared their observations with mine. Most of these books came from dealers in rare tomes such as Francis Edwards in London and Dawson's Book Shop in Los Angeles. But I also became a frequent visitor at a book store in Long Beach. A sign over the building said, "Bertram Smith, ACRES OF BOOKS." No doubt there were acres. At times I would discover a rare volume that had been overlooked by other dealers who, if they had it, would charge me a steep price.

Bertram Smith, the owner, was an older man, tall, slightly stooped, and of rather scant build, dried up, a pleasant man — a man who belonged to and knew books. At times he would make a trip to England and return with carloads of books.

One book lover spots another and seemingly Bertram Smith had the same taste in books as myself. He would draw my attention to books just arrived at the store and especially those by an Australian author, a man who knew the South Pacific, by the name of Louis Becke.

"Here are some books by Louis Becke," he would say, "I am sure you have not seen these."

He would also draw my attention to articles about Becke he had collected, and also a sea writer who called himself C. Fox Smith. One would think that C. Fox Smith's salt water poems were written by a seaman. Not so — Bertram Smith showed me an article that said C. Fox Smith had passed on and that the "C" stood for "Cicely." She was a British writer — hailed by Joseph Conrad. It was her brother who was the sailor.

It was nearing Christmas. I had made another pleasant pilgrimage to Bertram Smith and his Acres of Books. It was only a short distance to the bus

stop at the corner of Ocean Boulevard and Pacific Avenue, where I used to catch the bus to Terminal Island. From there I took the ferry home to San Pedro. But I just missed the bus. It would be quite some time before the next departure, so I figured I might as well pass some time at "The Pike," the Long Beach amusement park located near the beach. I had only to cross the street to get there.



The Pike, amusement park at Long Beach.

— Historical Society of Long Beach

I was roaming about, just passing time, when a voice from behind me called "Hello, captain!"

I turned.

"Don't you know me?"

"Of course I know you — 'Reckless Ross' — Ross Millman, how in hell did you get here?"

Millman had been a passenger with me in an old bark called the *Chin Pu* on a passage from Kobe to Manila. He had not changed in the ten years or so since I parted company with him. He still had a smile on his face, but now he was in his working rig, highlaced boots, shoulder pads; he carried a crash helmet under his arm. Ross' profession was riding a motorcycle around the inside of a giant barrel — of course he would be on The Pike. Or some other midway like it.

"See my barrel set up over there," he said pointing to the right. "Note my trusty Indian motorcycle. I just got through with a performance; I'm going over to get myself a bite. Come and join me. We have a lot to talk about."

In front of Ross Millman's barrel, now labeled "Motordrome," was a barker crying, "Hurry, hurry! Avoid the rush! Get your tickets here! Reckless Ross, the Human Fly, he rides his bike around the inside of a barrel! Hurry, hurry!"

"You need a guy like that to sell tickets," said



"Reckless Ross" Millman (in helmet) sits astride his "trusty Indian motorcycle." He can be seen over the back wheel of the bicycle in this photograph on The Pike.
— Historical Society of Long Beach

Millman somewhat apologetically as he saw me turning my head. "The more sold the better, though. After all there is a limit. I am getting older and the time will come when I won't be able to do stunts anymore."

I had long ago formed an impression that Ross Millman was thrifty and he had to be — he probably still had the first nickel he ever earned. My companion was a man of small stature, not much over five feet tall with a small athletic build. He looked like a miniature football tackle, but it would take two Ross Millmans to make one of those.

We entered an eatery close by and sat down. A waitress hurried to our table and smiled at Millman.

"Let me introduce you to Captain Klebingat, Debbie, the captain of the sailing ship that carried my barrel, Indian motorcycles and myself from Kobe, Japan to Manila, on my world tour."

"Pleased to meet you," she said, holding order pad and pencil in her hands, "Ross has often told me about the time he took a voyage in a sailing ship. I can't quite imagine him on a sailing ship — he's not the type. You're the type, captain."

She took our order after some further banter.

"I still recall that morning in Kobe when I came on board," said Millman. They had loaded my barrel and motorcycles and the rest of my belongings on a lighter. It was towed out to the anchorage. We rounded the back end of the ship, 'stern' I think you call it. Near the top of what you later told me was the 'transom' were some Chinese letters at least two feet high. About two feet below them there were smaller Chinese letters and then some feet below that again was a translation: CHIN

The Editor of the *SEA LETTER* is David Hull, Principal Librarian of the National Maritime Museum.

PU SHANGHAI. I looked up and on the mast there was a flag that must have been Chinese. It had five colors. I wondered what kind of a strange old thing I was trusting myself to — not to mention my barrel and bikes.”

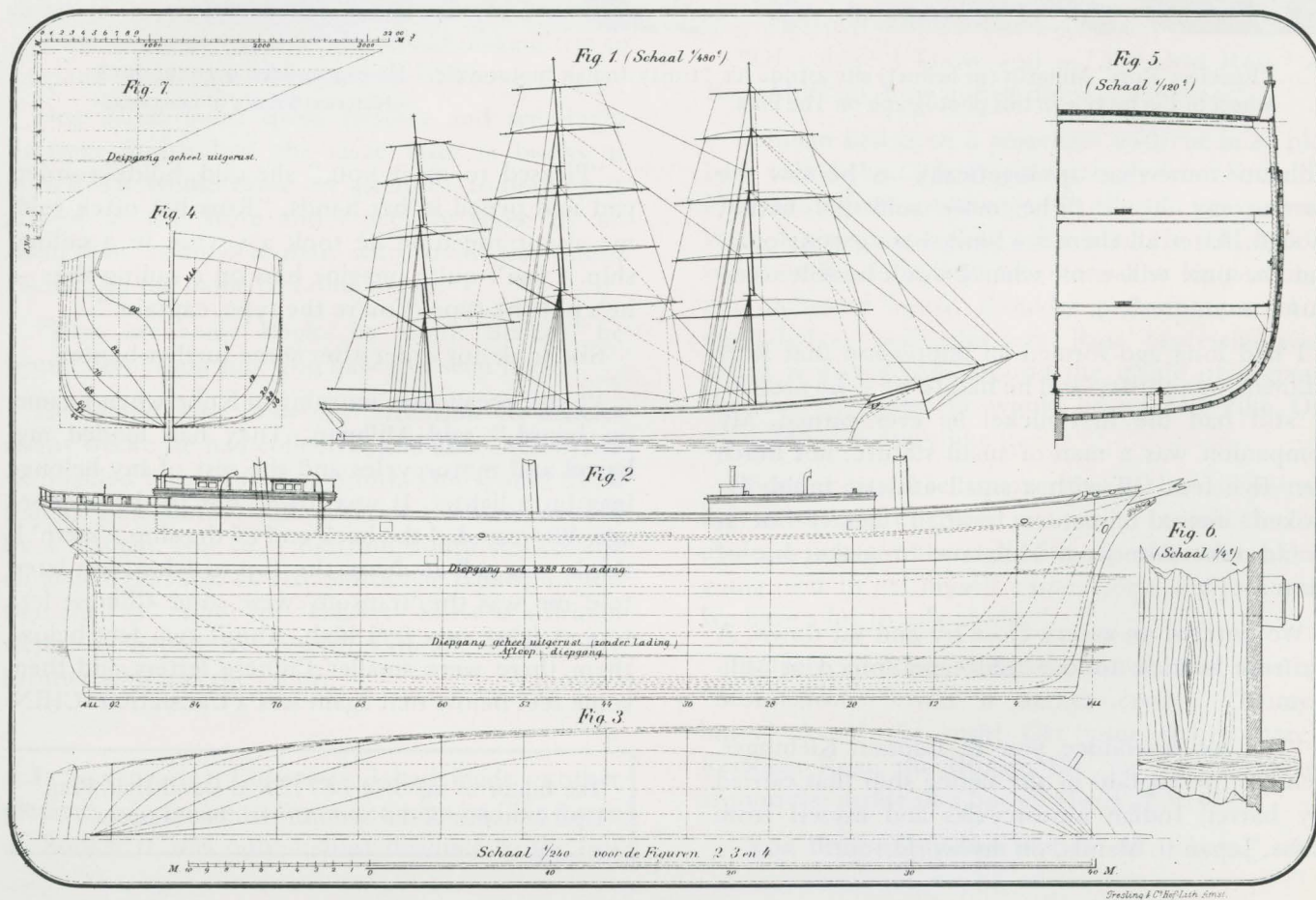
“Yes, that was the Chinese ensign on the gaff,” I replied, “the flag of the Chinese Republic of Sun Yat Sen. I don’t remember the colors. My reaction when I saw the *Chin Pu* wasn’t much different than yours and it wasn’t too long before . . . It must have been near the first of November of 1918 when I took command. It was my first job as captain; I was twenty-nine years old. The ship was to be made ready to sail within fourteen days. My new boss — an elegantly attired British-looking gentleman — so directed me. He had just bought the ship from the Japanese and had organized a one-ship, fly-by-night (as I learned later) company called the Pacific & Oriental Shipping Co. This was so that the phone could be answered ‘P & O,’ the initials of the long established Peninsular & Oriental Shipping Co., the famous British firm.”

The *Chin Pu* was built as the composite full-

rigged ship *Amstel* in Amsterdam in 1874. She was a three-decked vessel of unorthodox construction, built of steel but sheathed with a layer of 3½" teak up to the load waterline. This in turn was sheathed with yellow metal to keep out shipworms and prevent marine growth. The builder had fastened the teak planks to the steel hull by boring holes through the teak and steel, then fitting lead pipes through just the steel, and finally driving trunnels right through. I don’t know whether this method of fastening was a protection against electrolysis, or simply “softening” to protect the wooden trunnels from the steel. The odd construction of the *Amstel* was completed by a wooden stem, a wooden keel, a wooden sternpost, and a wooden rudder.

For the best part of her long life, she was a “country wallah” called the *Barendine Osiria*, plying between the ports of the Malay Archipelago with salt and other cargos. Until sold to the Japanese during the war, her home port was Batavia on the island of Java. The salt cargos had gradually eaten away at the steel plating that formed her bottom. When I joined her, this damage had been repaired with a four-inch layer of cement rein-

Plans of the *Amstel*, later *Chin Pu*, from the Maritime Museum Prins Hendrik in Rotterdam. Note detail at right showing trunnel fastening through lead sleeve.



forced by chicken wire. The frames - ribs — were also wasted; at the turn of the bilge they had been fitted with doublers to beef them up. I did not know this when I joined her because she was more than three-quarters laden and I could not inspect her hold. I found it out later when she was empty in Manila.

Just before Chinese registry as the *Chin Pu*, she was the *Kaishin Maru*, registered in Dairen, Manchuria. She was then under the Japanese flag, and there was a plan afoot — because of the wartime shortage of bottoms — to turn her into a motor-ship. Her rigging was dismantled, and then it was decided that she was too old for this purpose and an engine would shake her apart. The masts and yards were put back in her in haphazard fashion, no sailing ship men being available. It was at this point that I took command.

"The ship doesn't even have compasses," I told the owner. "Any school kid will tell you that a ship needs a compass to find her way across the sea. And look at the rigging . . . it is all wrong." I tried to keep my frustration in check, as I told my employer about the ship's shortcomings.

I had relieved a Japanese captain, who had no intention of going to sea; he was just drawing wages. While this man had not bothered to find compasses for the ship, he had insisted that a Japanese wooden bathtub with a house to cover it be built aft. A copper pipe led all the way from the donkey boiler to heat this. The donkey boiler was at the other end of the ship, forward of the foremast. Steam was supposed to be kept up night and day to keep this bath hot for the officers. It takes fresh water to do this — a short commodity on a sailing ship — but he seemingly did not worry about that. Three men were signed on to keep steam up in the boiler for the officers' baths. I laid off two of these donkeymen immediately. Steam would be to run the winch hereafter.

The waitress served the meal and lingered to hear us reminisce.

"It was a godsend that I found you just the same," continued Millman. "I could not get out of Japan. All steamers were booked months ahead. I wanted to get to Manila by Carnival time. I made oodles of money down there. More money than I ever made on any stand. I don't care if she was an old tub."

"She wasn't a 'tub'," I said a little huffily, "but she was — unusual. *Chin Pu* had her good points. Her trouble was that she was getting up in years.

One thing I can tell you now is that we came mighty near not making it because of the masts. You could have been late for your Carnival.

"We sailed from Kobe on December 23; you may remember the steamers that crowded the harbor. In command of my first ship, I was acutely aware of them. The windlass had needed fixing, but the owner did not think this important. As a result we were not able to get the mudhook up after we had set sail. With the anchor dragging, you cannot steer the ship. The *Chin Pu* dragged out of Kobe harbor, luckily missing the steamers while we were struggling with the windlass. Finally I gave her more chain and stopped her abreast of the Shinsaki Iron Works, a couple of miles outside the harbor proper. This firm had outfitted the ship and the manager knew what was the matter; in a few hours the windlass was repaired.

"Again, we proceeded to sea with a strong, fair wind," I said, warming to my story for the waitress' benefit. "By morning we had left the bay that holds Osaka, Kobe and Hiogo and by 8:00 a.m. on December 24 we were abreast of Murotasaki. That was the last we were going to see of Japan. We had been jogging along, but now I set all sail.

"There was no cause for worry as I turned in on Christmas Eve, 1918. I felt good. My first command was going well. The wind was fair, the sea was fair."

"I don't know anything about that," said Millman, "I was not feeling too well those first days at sea. I didn't care much what was going on."

"Well, what you missed was that at about 2:00 a.m. on Christmas morning Degerlund, the mate, came down and called me. The ship had started a bad rolling.

"Hurry up, captain, the masts are going to roll right over the side!"

"It took me a short second to depart my bunk and rush on deck. The night was dark. The ship was rolling to alarming angles. The rigging on the masts was slack and as the ship rolled one way, the rigging on the opposite side tightened with a loud crash and thump. Hesitating for a moment, the *Chin Pu* then rolled the other way and the shrouds and backstays tightened with a crash and thump on the other side.

"I ordered the ship put on a course where she wouldn't roll so violently. 'Get some lignum vitae bullseyes,' I said, 'Splice a rope tail on each one.' This took a little while. 'Now get up on the crane



The former British tea clipper *Lothair*, photographed by H. H. Morrison on the Pacific Coast, shows swifts in place about two-fifths of the way up the mainmast. The swifts appear as dark, horizontal lines just above the half circular top platform.

line on the foremast, and hitch one of these tails on each of the backstays on each side, topmast, topgallant, and royal. Take the end of a three-inch rope up with you. Start reeving it through the bullseyes. Make a kind of cat's cradle up there.'

"'Number One' bosun — a Japanese, and one who spoke English — was watching all this, together with the rest of the Japanese crew. Only the two mates in *Chin Pu* were Caucasian, you recall; they communicated with the sailors through Number One and Number Two bosuns.

"'Now set it up,' I said after the snakeline was rove. By heaving on this three-inch line, zig-zagged back and forth between the two sets of backstays, the rigging was nipped in at a point about one third of the way up the mast. The rope rendered easily through the hardwood bullseyes.

"'Now, go and do the same thing on the mainmast,' I told Number One bosun."

The waitress went to serve another customer who had just come in; she left the sea story at our table reluctantly.

"I missed all that about saving the masts," said Reckless Ross, sitting in the coffee shop on The Pike.

"Everybody to his specialty," I told him.

The mate, Degerlund, told me at the time that he had never seen this method used before.

I gave Degerlund the old-time name for this improvisation, "swifiting."

I had seen it done on the *Anna* when I was ordinary seaman and I ordered it done myself once before, when I was mate in the *S.N. Castle*. Captain von Dahlern was tickled; the old barkentine was laden with phosphate rock and there was danger that the foremast would go overboard with her rolling. In the *Anna* the rope itself was passed around each backstay and a couple of men had to go up to render it around them when we hove tight. The bullseyes made it go much easier.

"She didn't stop rolling, I remember that," said Millman over a cup of coffee. He looked at his watch. "It is about time for another show; I've got to go. I remember the cabin stove getting loose from its moorings and jumping over the table onto the settee. I often thought about the *Chin Pu* after I unloaded in Manila; I wondered what happened to her. And to you. How did you get back to the States?"

"Give me your card," I said. "I'm about to begin

a long swing through the South Seas with my owner and his party. I'll write you a letter. It will give me something to do. How I got back to the States is a story in itself."

Here is the letter I wrote to Millman, as best as I can reconstruct it.

* * * * *

Dear Ross,

I enjoyed our chat on The Pike. I'm glad to see that you haven't broken your neck. I don't know which is the most dangerous, an old sailing ship or a new Indian motorbike.

In any case, here is what happened to the old sailing ship.

After your gear and the rest of the cargo — empty gin bottles and carboys of acid — were discharged, the vessel changed flag from Chinese to Philippine Register. I was compelled to pay off the Japanese and hire a crew of Filipinos. But bona fide seamen of that race were then hard to get. All except two of those hired had never made a trip to sea. Even those two had nothing but steamship experience. For these reasons I was allowed to keep my two Caucasian mates and the Japanese chief cook and carpenter. I figured that I would be able to train the crew in handling sail and the ship while we were heading north along the lee side of Luzon where there are smooth seas and light land and sea breezes.

The ship was loaded with a cargo of copra meal, highly combustible and liable to catch fire due to spontaneous combustion. I checked at the local fire station; they told me that five weeks after the stuff got wet in local warehouses with leaky roofs it burst into flame. Copra meal was used as fuel under the boilers of local tugboats, I noticed.

I never gave a thought to the possibility that there was a sinister effort on the part of the owner to have the ship disappear at sea.

The war was over and the bottom had dropped out of the freight market. The ship was highly insured, for a quarter of a million dollars. She was being sent to sea with a bunch of landlubbers who had never seen the ocean — they did not even speak English, but Tagalog — and a cargo that would catch fire easily if it got wet.

Well, I was young. It was my first command and I wanted to make a success of it. We trained the

crew. Aft we were not even armed, and here we had a complement of Filipinos who for all we knew were unacquainted with law and order. But somehow they respected us and we were able to handle the ship when we struck the northeast monsoon at the north end of Luzon. Strong winds started to blow.

The ship began to leak as the seas got rougher and now the pumps broke down. They were ancient antediluvian pumps; Magellan and Captain Cook surely had better ones.

We had to look for a port where these pumps could be repaired. We tried to make Keelung, Formosa (the Japanese called this port *Keerun* and of course the island is today known as Taiwan). I hove her to off the port on a moonlit night, but in the early hours of the morning the wind increased to a northeast gale and the *Chin Pu* was fast going ashore. It was make sail now and claw off, never mind her tired old rigging and sails. With all the canvas she would stagger under we crept along the line of breakers. A steamer sighted us and we were so close in that they reported on their wireless that a bark was ashore on Formosa.⁷

This report reached Manila and the owners must have been rubbing their hands. *Chin Pu* was the only vessel in those waters that met that description. The insurance money was all but theirs.

We fooled them. We didn't go ashore. One of *Chin Pu*'s virtues was that she was weatherly. That's what kept us off that Formosa beach. Another quality she had was the ability, when loaded, to come about in almost any kind of sea.

Anyway, we reached Nagasaki. Some cargo was discharged to get at the pump suction. Then — as predicted — the ship caught fire due to spontaneous combustion. Water had found its way through the ancient decks to the copra meal. The ship was beached and scuttled. The salvage tugs pumped her out and towed her back to her anchorage. The owner appeared, went to Shanghai and hired another captain and two mates. I was fired.

It was no secret in the maritime circles of Nagasaki that I was discharged for doing my duty and saving the ship. I still have the indignant letters written by D.F. Robertson, the Lloyds Surveyor for the port, so that the owner's caper would be no blot on my professional escutcheon. The American consul, Edwin L. Neville, took my part as well. I received three months' extra pay and money for first class transportation to San Francisco; he demanded this settlement from the owner.

But passage to San Francisco was hard to get; it all had to be booked months ahead. I overhauled the consulate flagpole, a proper seamanlike affair with a fiddled topmast. I loafed around Nagasaki, feeling like a millionaire, plenty of money in my pocket.

"Do you think she will reach San Francisco, captain?" they asked me at Lloyds Agents one day.

"If she gets out through Van Diemen Strait and into the Pacific, she should," I replied.

"But will she?"

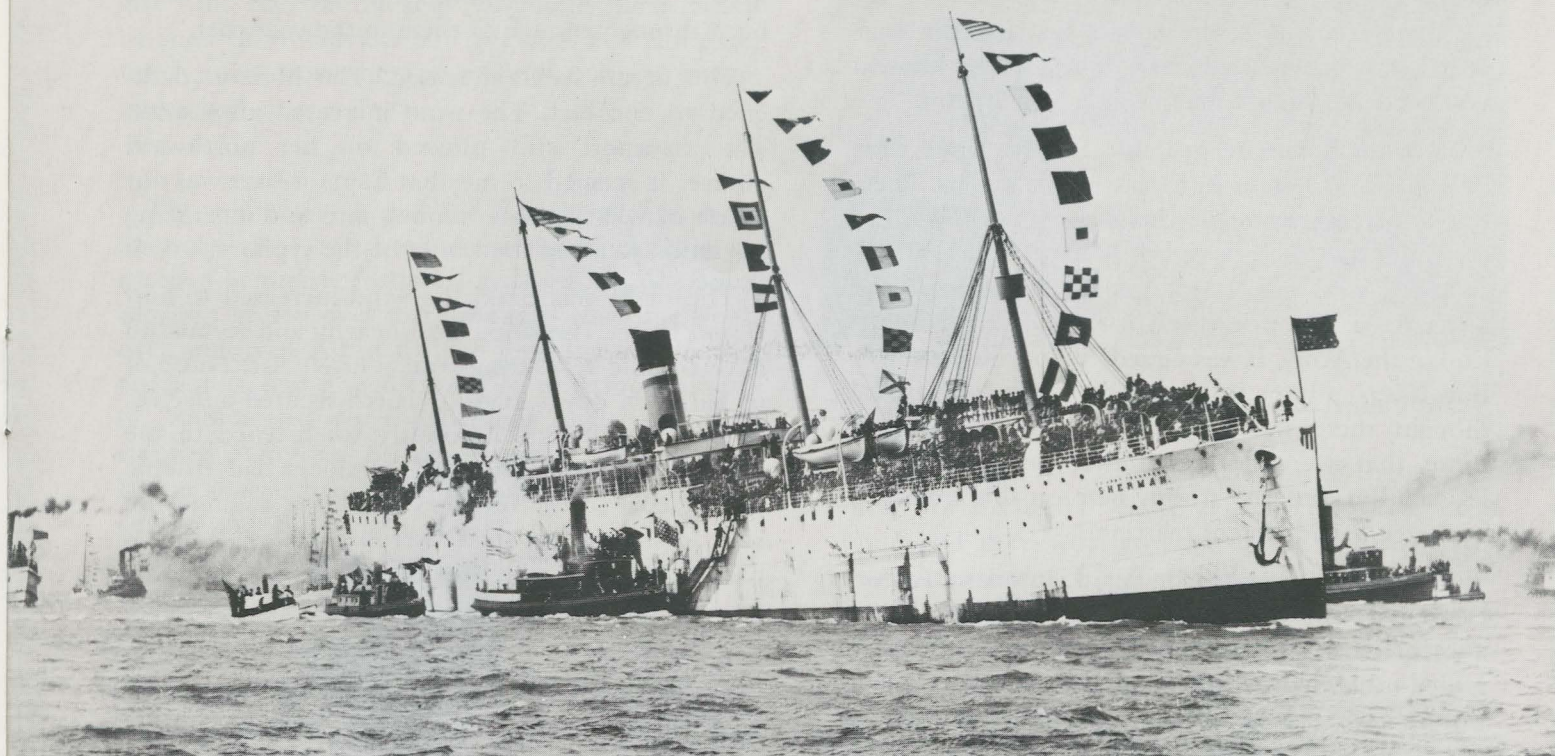
I could not answer that.

Finally into port came steaming the U.S. Army Transport *Sherman*. These ships used this harbor to fill their bunkers with coal. Mr. Neville secured passage for me and my two mates as "destitute seamen."

We sailed for Manila with about two thousand troops on board that had been shipped at Vladivostok. They had been fighting the Communists, but the folks in the U.S. were tired of war and these troops were withdrawn.

We arrived at Manila. All three of us had a stateroom on the passage south. After two weeks in port, additional troops were shipped and some sailors from the USS *Brooklyn*. Room was scarce and now all three of us were suddenly reduced to the circumstance of common sailors and lodged in the 'tween deck of No. 5 hatch. We were deprived of officer privileges; we could no longer circulate on the upper decks and in the public rooms. But we were not alone. With us were American captains and mates, as well as crews, who had delivered three auxiliary schooners to foreign owners in the Orient and were now on the way back to the U.S. Auxiliary schooners — the Orient was alive with them at that time. Under the stimulus of the war, these large wooden schooners — some with auxiliary oil engines and some with auxiliary steam engines — were built by the scores in the Pacific Northwest; more than fifty were built for the French, and about half that number for the Norwegians.

⁷ The Ship Press Chappel, aboard the Museum's *Balclutha*, has printed a limited edition of broadsides in which are described the curious connections between a similar incident on the southbound voyage of the *Chin Pu*, Captain Klebingat, a painting by W.A. Coulter of another vessel in like danger, Karl Kortum, and the rescue of the four-mast bark *Falls of Clyde* (now a museum ship in Honolulu). —Ed.



ABOVE: Twenty years before, the U.S. Army Transport *Sherman* had arrived from Manila in San Francisco Bay crowded with troops returning from the Spanish-American war. The city outdid itself in a homecoming celebration.

BELOW: The auxiliary schooner *Monterey* was built in the Pacific Northwest. This vessel is typical of the "more than fifty built for the French . . . about half that number for the Norwegians." Her original name was *Adrien Bodin* and she was built in Portland in 1917.



The transport was really commanded by the so-called Quartermaster Captain. Where his authority left off and that of the ship's skipper, Captain Kerr, began, I do not know. The food on the *Sherman* was awful, mostly a kind of stew they called "slum," a mixture of chunks of meat and potatoes, the whole mess thickened with flour. But what could you expect? Many of the people in the steward's department were not interested in their jobs at all. They were professional cardsharps out to fleece the troops in poker; in order to get the berth, they had paid the chief steward. A poker game was going on every night in an empty coal bunker.

There was no fresh water for any of us or for the troops. It was saltwater showers, even salt water for shaving. But I was in luck. One of my former shipmates had noticed me.

"Hello there, Chips," says he.

My former shipmate was "Bingo" (as we called him), the electrician on board the tanker *William F. Herrin*, where I had served as carpenter for nearly a year.

"We have plenty of fresh water for the engi-

neers' crew," says Bingo, who was part of the *Sherman's* engine room gang. "Just use the engineers' shower when you need it and let me know if you need anything, I may be able to help you."

It made life more bearable for the three *Chin Pu's* in No. 5 hatch. But I pitied the troops. These were not enlisted men who made a profession of the military; these were drafted men. I had received a card myself that said, "Greetings," and ordered me to appear at a certain date for induction in the Army. It was signed "Woodrow Wilson." But I was a bona fide seaman; I wasn't drafted. I thought there was very little to choose between those that were drafted under the iron heel of Prussianism and the troops here on this transport in charge of indifferent martinets.

There was one in particular, Lieutenant Taylor. He dared not show himself in the troop deck unescorted; he knew better. Someone would have pulled the lightswitch and Lieutenant Taylor would have been grabbed and thrown out of an open 'tween deck port.

There was one soldier in the brig. He was there because he could restrain himself no longer and had said to Taylor in front of the company, "It's worth ten years, no, it's worth twenty years just to call you a damn son-of-a-bitch, you God damn son-of-a-bitch." He should have known better and waited to speak up until the *Sherman* reached San Francisco and he got his discharge. He was in the dungeon on board — the brig — awaiting court martial.

And we had another, an officer in disgrace. He was supposed to have been guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, a tall Texan named Major Buck.

During the night, some of the troops would break into the bakery to steal bread. So a sentry was stationed there.

On we steamed, now bound north, back to Nagasaki to get more coal. Nagasaki was the major coaling port in that part of the world. Coal and fresh water were constantly expended — the *Sherman* was losing stability. We neared the north end of Formosa. The seas were smooth, an easy swell from the eastward was making up. Fair weather, you may think. A beautiful sunset, rosy, and the sunrise just as gorgeous. Long streamers of cirrus clouds radiating from a point in the heavens to the eastward.

"You are running into a typhoon," I told Bingo, "We will pass through or near the center. I do not

need a barometer to foretell a typhoon — I have been through enough of them in the year past."

The ocean swell increased. The horizon darkened to the east. The wind increased after dark. The transport still plowed on her northward course. It seemed to me that Captain Kerr was not aware of what he was running into and was taking no action to avoid the center of the typhoon.

The night was dark, the wind increased to hurricane force. The ship rolled heavily and seemed to have trouble recovering from a heavy list. Those of us battened down in No. 5 hatch secured ourselves in our pipe bunks. Anxiously we listened to the turmoil on deck. The coal trimmers had trouble getting coal to the furnaces. Coal was rolling from side to side on the slick fireroom plates — it was hard to catch a shovelful on the fly and throw it into the open furnace door.

Some firemen on furlough from the USS *Brooklyn* were ordered to help out in the fireroom. They were valiant; I am convinced that their help keeping up steam saved the ship. For my part I worried, but what could I do?

Captain Kerr knew by this time what he was in for. His position was now somewhere near Okinawa. He called for moral support. On board as a passenger was a skipper who had commanded the former Dutch liner *Tjikembang*. I heard that he helped out Kerr. They could have asked me, and if they had, the ship would not have been in this predicament.

Just before joining *Chin Pu*, I had been through one typhoon after another as mate and navigator of the four-mast bark *Star of Poland*. The captain, Jack Larsen, lost the *Poland* on the coast of Japan when he disregarded my advice. I had urged him to get clear of the land when we finally got a favorable slant — a strong norther for a day. We were making twelve knots; we should have used the slant to achieve a "commanding position," as mariners call it, a hundred miles to windward of the approach to Uraga Channel. Uraga Channel led to Tokyo Bay, our destination.

Our situation in the *Poland* now became increasingly dangerous because we were on a lee shore and the current was setting that way, too. The worst kind of lee shore. And another typhoon. I got a star sight at dawn on the morning of the ship's last day; I didn't trust it. I kept the master informed. At noon I got a sight that I *had* to trust — it confirmed the bad news from the star observation. At the supper table I told Larsen that I wouldn't

give him 10¢ for the ship. Ordinarily Jack Larsen listened to my advice, but this time he hadn't and the typhoon drove the *Star of Poland* ashore before morning.

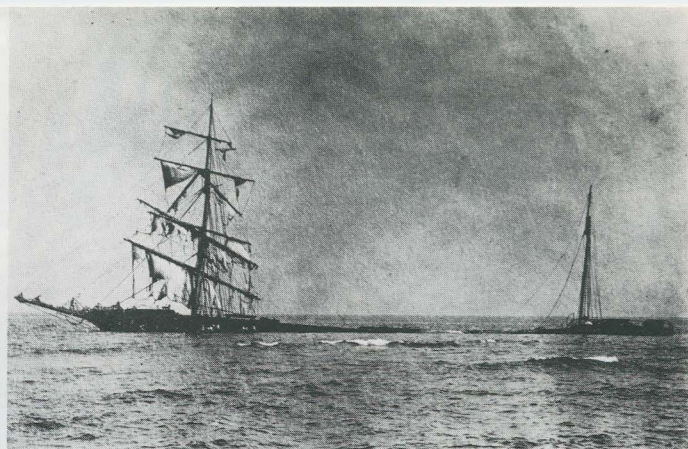
My shipmates aboard the U.S. Army Transport *Sherman* and I, relegated to inactivity below decks, listened helplessly to the rising storm. At one point the ship heeled over to starboard — over she went, over and over. All of us held onto the pipe berths, out bunks, and hoped that *they* were secured safely. She heeled to a dangerous angle and then stopped. On the bridge, Captain Kerr and his Dutch advisor had the ship going full ahead on one engine and full astern on the other (I have not mentioned that she had twin screws), hoping she would recover and slowly right herself.

In the troop deck we heard a heavy crash. A batch of pipe berths had broken adrift with their occupants and dropped berths and men into the starboard wing. Luckily not many were hurt. For all that she was high out of the water, the doors to the houses and cabins on the upper decks failed to keep out the sea and rain driven through their cracks and around their edges by the force of the wind. Even the bridge was not impregnable.

I could picture the two skippers up there anxiously watching the ship. Slowly she recovered and came back to an even keel. It was a narrow squeak.

By morning the wind moderated quite a bit and by noon it was nearly calm. It took hours to secure all that had broken adrift. There was no breakfast — the steward's crew was trying to establish some order. One of the officers' wives was particularly obnoxious. She demanded her morning coffee. Someone in the steward's department found out that the firemen in the fire room had made themselves some coffee, using a coal shovel as a container to brew it in. So this steward got hold of some of the coffee brewed in a coal scoop and served it to the officer's biddy. It was afternoon before food could be served to troops, passengers and crew.

As the ship's bunkers became empty, the engineers had to resort to coal stored in the lower hold of No. 5 hatch. To move the coal there were wheelbarrows. They called for volunteers among the troops to wheel the coal from the hatch to the bunkers. There were no takers. Again the men from the *Brooklyn* came to the rescue, but with a



The *Star of Poland* ashore on the coast of Japan, 1918.

proviso: "You have to serve us food in the crews' mess. We are tired of eating slum." This was agreed upon and they wheeled coal to the bunkers, just enough each day for the ship's twenty-four hour needs.

The weather stayed fair after this and we arrived at Nagasaki. The Japanese doctors came on board to clear the *Sherman* out of quarantine. In the ship's hospital they notice a man, a member of the crew.

"That man has cholera."

Nobody is allowed ashore, and the ship is anchored off. In eight hours the man was dead. Seemingly the Navy doctors aboard had no experience with this disease. They took his body ashore and cremated it. Portable latrines were hoisted on board the ship. No human feces were allowed to be discharged into the bay. Samples of stool of all the troops and passengers were taken and sent ashore. Subsequently, several men were taken ashore to the quarantine station as suspect. More than once all the troops were rushed in batches to the station and bathed in large tanks spiked with some disinfectant. Day after day passed while I and the two *Chin Pu* mates gazed at the familiar shore.

Meanwhile the coaling proceeded, with the ship in quarantine. There were sentries posted so that nobody could get off the *Sherman*. Lighters of coal were sent out to us, and from them stages were rigged up the ship's side. Men and women swarmed up the stages and each basket of coal was handed up from stage to stage to stage — and finally dumped in the bunker. That's the way it was done in Japan at that time; a case oil cargo would be discharged the same way. It was something to see — a human elevator at work hour after hour after hour.

Major Buck, the officer in disgrace, managed to



Nagasaki was the major coaling port in this part of the world. From lighters alongside, a "human elevator" passes baskets of coal up from stage to stage to stage in bunkering a steamer.

have a case of whiskey delivered at the gangway, but Captain Kerr got wind of it. He went down and took hold of the case of whiskey and dropped it into the drink.

We must have been two weeks in port when I heard a voice in a sampan cry out: "Captain Klebingat of the *Chin Pu*!"

I went on deck. The man searching for me was Mr. Shimizu, the *banto* or business manager of the ship chandler I had traded with when the *Chin Pu* had made port those many months before. "I have news," he said, "The *Chin Pu* never reached the open Pacific. She was picked up dismasted about a hundred miles from Shanghai and she's in port there, a derelict."

Dismasted. Of course.

I must admit that the news gave me a certain satisfaction. The owners now would not be collecting the quarter of a million dollars' worth of insurance. The underwriters would have paid the salvors' bill to tow her into port and then they

would have told the owners, "Here is your ship," and washed their hands of her. Pacific & Oriental Shipping Company was broke. Captain Raab, who relieved me, was a pleasant young Swede. He was a member of the China Coast Officers' Guild, but he had been serving in steamers. He had only been a deckboy on a sailing ship; he had never been a sailing ship master or even officer. The owners did not want a man who knew his business. Raab wanted to pump me on handling the ship. I told him that I paid for my learning, that from now on the *Chin Pu* was his affair. I was bitter, as you may well imagine. He asked me one time how I prevented the masts from going overboard.

"Well," I said, "that is my secret. You may have a method of your own." Seemingly, he did not have one.

The swift, very much a jury arrangement, had been sent down in Manila. The ship's rigging had tightened up when we took in cargo; I had seen this happen on other ships. The Japanese crew had been sent home — they would have known how to save the masts as I had taught them. But the owners

had changed the flag for their own reasons and it was now a Filipino crew. The plot to lose the ship had come to naught.

Slowly all cholera suspects returned aboard the transport. They had been found to be clean. Next they coaled the ship, and another supply was taken aboard in No. 5 lower hold.

We sailed; it must have been twenty days before we sighted Point Reyes.

Eight hours later the immigration officers boarded the ship.

"Returning Destitute Seaman," says I.

"Pass on, Destitute Seaman," says he.

Back on East Street many of my friends had heard that I was skipper of a bizarre old craft called the *Chin Pu*.

"Where is your ship?" they asked.

"Well, it is a long tale," says I, "How about a scoop of beer?"

"Beer?" says they, "Haven't you heard? This is Prohibition. All they serve now is an imitation called Near Beer."

A bitter disappointment to a returning mariner.

It was a few weeks later that I landed the job as skipper of the four-masted schooner *Melrose*, this time through my friend Julius Mendelsohn, manag-

er of J. Cohen's waterfront tailor shop. Mendelsohn and Capt. Von Dahler had stood up for me five years before when I had got my citizenship papers. Speaking of Christmases at sea, the one aboard *Melrose* — just a year after swiftening the rigging in *Chin Pu* — remains in my memory a blur of hard work. The ship was sinking. We weren't thinking about Christmas — we were too busy working the hand pumps and sawing up wood from the deck cargo to feed the boiler that kept the steam pump working. All this in a hard southeaster somewhere southwest of the Straits of Juan de Fuca. In the end we kept the ship from filling and eventually reached the Hawaiian Islands. But 'nough said; that is another story.

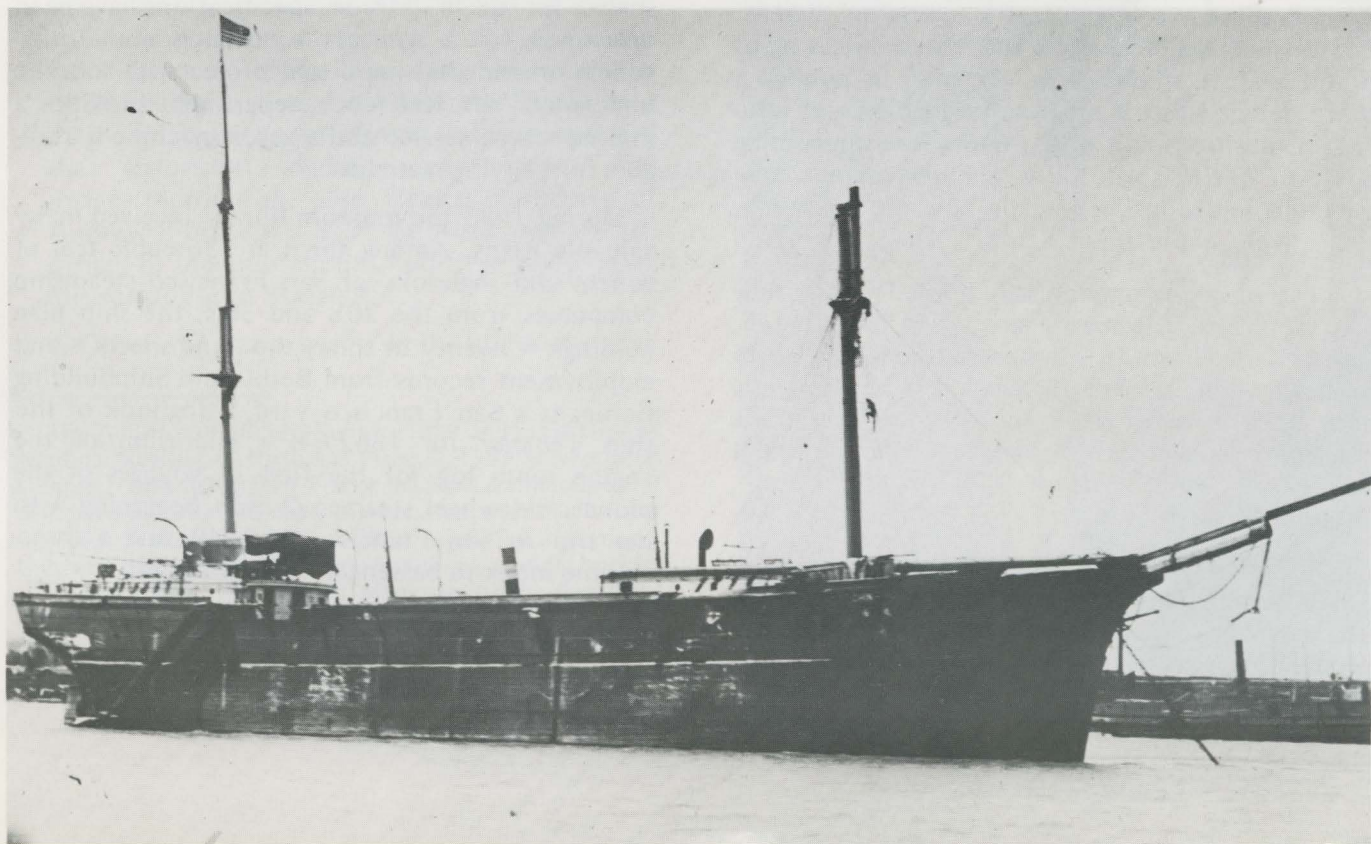
I hope you continue to go round and round — don't break your neck. With best wishes against that happening, I remain your friend and captain.

Fred Klebingat

It is fifty years since I posted this letter and I wonder if Reckless Ross is still with us. He was about five years younger than I, and I write this at the age of 94. There is a chance that he is; he may see this story.

So therefore Merry Christmas to you, Reckless, and the same goes for the rest of my friends.

"Dismasted. Of course ..." Here is the *Chin Pu* after being towed into Shanghai, with minimum cost to the insurers because she was not a total loss. The Philippines were a dependency of the United States at this time, so vessels registered there flew the American flag. The *Chin Pu* was subsequently made into a storage hulk at Shanghai for the Robert Dollar Co. of San Francisco.



Highlights of Museum News for 1983

Artifacts and Fine Arts Collections

Although our emphasis over the last several years has been to improve the quality of care and cataloging of our collections, the Museum has continued to collect items of West Coast maritime interest. Most of the new artifacts, some 75 separate "accessions," have come to us as donations from members of the public. There are far too many things to describe here, but we can mention some of the more significant pieces.

In the area of fine arts, we received four paintings of 19th century West Coast vessels done by contemporary artist Darrell McClure, a water color of the tug *Sea Cloud* by Jennifer Green, a lovely old portrait of the four-masted schooner *A. M. Baxter*, and a modern painting of the four-masted bark *Moshulu* by Thomas Bell. We purchased, using a fund provided by the Museum Association, a small painting of the freighter *M. M. Dant* and a World War I era shipbuilding poster.

Among the more notable artifacts acquired by donation were a 13-foot lapstrake pulling boat from around 1920, a sea chest belonging to Captain Halvorson of the *Balclutha*, banners from maritime labor groups, a collection of contemporary fancy knotwork, a gauge board from the Fulton Iron Works, a steam launch engine, a bow-mounted harpoon gun, a model of an offshore drilling ship, a collection of shipwrights' clamps, and a collection of artifacts and material relating to World War II shipbuilding. We plan to publish a more detailed listing of these interesting and valuable acquisitions and their donors in an upcoming *SEA LETTER* specifically acknowledging these generous individuals, but for now we can only, collectively, express our thanks.

Most of these materials are housed in the new Collections Management facility in Building E, Lower Fort Mason. Researchers are encouraged to make an appointment if they wish to study the new artifact accessions or any other objects in the museum's collections. To make an appointment call (415) 556-3797 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

During 1983, a secondary alarm system was activated throughout the building. To further protect the museum's collections, a Halon Fire Suppression System is currently being installed in the Fine Arts Room.

Special exhibits relative to the California Gold Rush were developed in time for the Gold Rush Conference November 18 - 19, 1983, in Lower Fort Mason. Well over 200 attended sessions in the new Library facility and toured the Museum Visitors' Gallery to view these exhibits and talk with staff on duty throughout the conference. The structural remains of the *Niantic* were among the objects on display of particular interest to many visitors.

J. Porter Shaw Library

The most important development in the Library in 1983 was its long-awaited move into new library quarters on the third floor of Building E, Lower Fort Mason. The new facility includes three study rooms, a typing room (bring your own typewriter), two listening rooms for studying oral history tapes and sea chanteys (call ahead if you wish to study the sea chantey records), and a microfilm reading room with a reader-printer.

There have been several major developments in the Library's departments. The Catalog department has tapped into the nation's largest bibliographic network with an OCLC computer terminal, enabling us to get over 200 volumes on the library shelves for use. In addition, specifications have been developed for a contract to catalog the Lyman collection and that important project will soon be underway. The Reference department provides a limited search service and a xerox machine is available for copying materials.

During 1983 the museum library received many valuable items. Among them are 36 cubic feet of papers and logbooks of San Francisco steamship companies from the 20's and 30's, the ship plan holdings — twenty or thirty thousand sheets — and employment records from Bethlehem Shipbuilding Company's San Francisco yard, a logbook of the ship *Templar* for 1862-64, a microfilm of the engine room log for the first 11 voyages of the pioneer sidewheel steamer *Oregon* beginning with her trip to San Francisco in 1849, and a three-volume index to passenger list information.

Photographs and Special Collections

No major collections were received during

1983 although several significant groups as well as individual items were received during the year. Of the nearly 2500 important additions to the photographs and special collections, the following are of particular interest:

▲ Four cartons of material were donated by the World War II shipbuilding firm, Western Pipe and Steel Company. This firm, which later became part of the U.S. Steel Company, launched some 50 ships during World War II at its South San Francisco yard. The material received consists of photographs of the yard and shipbuilding, drawings of the yard, and various papers.

▲ Union Lumber Company donated approximately 100 large format negatives of shipping activity at the Fort Bragg premises. The negatives cover the period from the early 1920's to the early 1930's.

▲ A group of some 77 original negatives of various vessels, including the *Abraham Rydberg* and the *Star of England* under sail, were purchased by the museum.

▲ We were able to purchase a glass stereographic negative of the Pacific Steamship Company vessel *Senator* docked at Monterey in about 1875.

▲ An early image of the *Vicar Of Bray* and other Falkland Island hulks, dating from about 1881, was received. This is the earliest image we have of this vessel, which has been of keen interest to the museum for many years.

▲ Possibly the most significant item received this year was an album of 14 images of various scenes and events of the San Francisco waterfront strike of 1901. This strike helped firmly establish the Sailors Union of the Pacific as a major force on the waterfront and demonstrated that waterfront solidarity was possible. The image reproduced here depicts members of Andrew Furuseth's SUP gathered outside the offices of the union in the Audiffred Building on Mission and East Streets.*

Other important events in the Library's photo

department this year include a cellulose nitrate negative duplication project, which is in full swing. In the photographic laboratory in the Polk Street Museum building, some 10,000 valuable and volatile nitrate negatives from the collections have been duplicated.

The Library is open from 1 to 5 pm Tuesdays through Fridays. You are cordially invited to make use of the new and expanded facilities, and the growing collections.

Exhibit Development

The Exhibit Division's major project, under the direction of Exhibit Specialist Stephen Canright, is a complete renewal of the Steamship Model Room, located at the west end of the Maritime Museum building at the foot of Polk Street. New panels, new curtains, and individual lighting for each of the models and panels have been installed. Work is going ahead on graphics materials and additional artifacts to be mounted on the panels. Museum Association Exhibit Technician Richard Everett has done most of the construction. The room will be opened in early 1984 with a reception for the Membership. We will keep you informed on this.

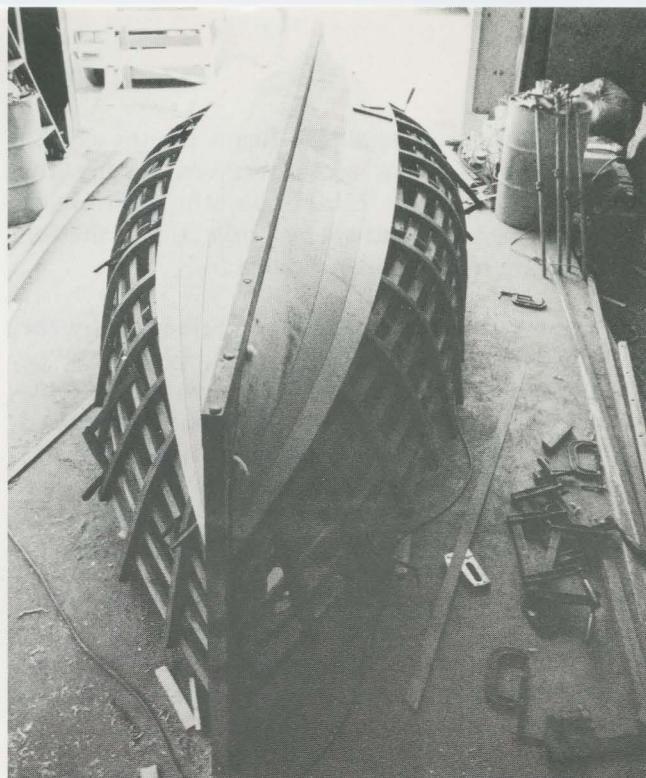
During the strike of 1901, members of the Sailors Union of the Pacific gather outside the union office in the Audiffred Building, now a completely restored National Register property.



* The Audiffred Building, built in 1889 and placed on the National Register of Historical Places in 1981, was restored complete with its original French mansard architecture and dedicated in 1983. To mark the occasion, the Mills Ryland Company, restorer of the Audiffred, published in conjunction with the National Maritime Museum a splendid booklet by Captain Klebingat entitled *Memories of the Audiffred Building & the Old City Front*, which is available at the Museum office. Karl Kortum, the Chief Curator, feels that this account is the finest short description of the historical San Francisco waterfront written this century.

Aboard the ferryboat *Eureka*, as part of a continuing NPS cyclic maintenance program, a 1931 Model A mail truck and a 1924 Dodge sidescreen delivery wagon were restored. The Dodge truck had been the work vehicle for the San Francisco Maritime Museum; the truck was donated to the Museum by Scott Newhall, who had restored it, with Karl Kortum doing the woodwork. About 1964 it was placed on display with other vintage automobiles aboard the ferry to contribute to a scene from before the bridges, when ferries carried vehicles across the bay.

Another notable project is the small boat restoration and replication program. Using special program funding from the National Park Service regional office, work on the boats has been contracted out to local builders. Completed thus far are two replica lifeboats for the *Balclutha* by Ray Speck of Sausalito, an eighteen-foot lifeboat by Jeff Rutherford of Richmond, and two lapstrake boats by Bill Elliot of Corte Madera. Upcoming restoration work includes a Lake Merritt sailing canoe, two work boats from the *Wapama*, an original sailing felucca, a power felucca, a sealing boat, and a Bar Pilot yawl boat. The museum's small craft fleet is beginning to shape up.



Patterned after an original by J. H. Burns of San Francisco which was built about 1910 — probably for use aboard a ferryboat — this eighteen-foot carvel lifeboat is presently displayed aboard the *Balclutha*. This photo shows the heavy framing, which has been steam-bent over an inner mold; planking in cedar has begun. Work by Jeffery Rutherford of Richmond.

Highlights of Association News for 1983

The National Maritime Museum Association has been exhibiting the historic World War II fleet submarine USS *Pampanito* (SS383) for over a year and a half. During this time, *Pampanito* has become a tremendously popular exhibit, hosting some 400,000 people to date. With a visitation of over 230,000 in 1983, *Pampanito* was, probably, the most visited historic vessel on the West Coast during that year.

Business generated by the USS *Pampanito* has created approximately seventeen new jobs in ticket sales, maintenance, restoration and administration. And, with the opening of the Association's new Museum Gift Shop at Pier 45 in midsummer of this year, four more persons have been employed.

During the last year, the *Pampanito* maintenance and restoration staff have carefully worked through the boat's interior in a diligent effort to reverse nearly forty years of neglect. The Association's goal is to return the sub as nearly as possible to her authentic wartime configuration, and thereby create a living memorial to the "silent service" of submariners.

There are too many completed restoration projects to list here, but the following is an outline of just a few of the major efforts. We recently restored to operation the emergency light system throughout the boat, and restored power and light to the "Christmas tree" panel in the Control Room, so named because of its red and green lights. This panel is a hull-opening indicator essential in assuring the vessel's watertight integrity prior to a dive. The submarine's two periscopes, previously stuck in a recessed position for over 30 years, have been overhauled, cleaned and raised, and are now fully functioning. The exterior conning tower profile has been returned to its original 1944 appearance, having been modified immediately following the War.

Much of the equipment formerly missing from *Pampanito* — some of it donated and some located below decks in the sub herself — has been reinstalled. Again, there are too many specific items to list. Some of the more obvious reinstallations include the placement of torpedo skids and rollers, the installation of galley tables, the replacement of

bunks in the crew's quarters and torpedo rooms, and the installation in the Control Room of navigational equipment from the scrapped USS *Roncador*. These additions better enable visitors to experience what it was like aboard a sub during World War II. There has been extensive restoration of each compartment, and historically irrelevant equipment and inappropriate paint colors have been removed. Damaged items have also been repaired or remade, and accurate equipment reinstalled.

Much needed historical explanations have been provided to visitors by way of several new pierside display signs, all designed in-house. In addition, a Mark 14 torpedo (World War II "steam" model) and a torpedo loading hatch removed from the sub have been refurbished and placed pierside.

Donations

Pampanito veterans have been quite generous in donating rare war patrol photographs to the Association. Cameras generally were not allowed on submarines, and donated war patrol photographs were the work of one man who distributed prints to many of the crew members. The original negatives were destroyed by a fire, but copy negatives of the existing photos have been made by Association staff.

The Association has also received two 20mm guns and mounts (one set of which has been installed on the after gun deck), 24 battle lanterns which have been restored and placed on board, *Pampanito*'s original battle flag (on display in the exhibit area on board), and many items of 1940's vintage memorabilia too numerous to list.

The Association has also been fortunate to have the excellent volunteer services of retired Fire Department Captain John Paulin, who is working two days a week on securing *Pampanito*'s many removable items, as well as on other assignments. His efforts have been extremely helpful in preventing theft on board. We have also been fortunate in having regular assistance from a Naval Reserve unit from Mare Island, under the direction of Commander David Lipscomb. The reserves have assisted the crew with many unique and difficult electrical and mechanical projects, and their efforts have been mutually beneficial since they have received regular hands-on training not usually available to the submarine reserve groups. We have also benefited from the volunteer services of Dennis Maley and Bill Scoggins.

Museum Gift Shop

The Association opened a small Museum gift shop in conjunction with the submarine exhibit

this summer. Located on Pier 45 next to the sub, the shop offers a fine assortment of related reading material, cards, slides and personalized *Pampanito* souvenirs. Members of the Association receive free admission to the submarine as well as a 10% discount on purchases made at the shop. The shop is open every day and you are cordially invited to stop by when visiting *Pampanito*.

Grant Program

Pampanito's popularity has enabled the Association to enter into a grants-making program. The staff and Board of Trustees of the Association have set the following guidelines for prospective grant recipients:

Grant requests will be considered which fall within the following area: requests made to promote the preservation of our maritime resources. Consideration will be given within the above guideline to grant requests from the National Park Service for projects pertaining to their maritime operations, and to grant requests from other parties pertaining to projects in the San Francisco Bay Area; all of the above grants will be based upon the need of the applicant. Request forms and additional information are available at the Association office, or call (415) 673-0700.

Since the initiation of the grantsmaking program, the Association has funded or partially funded projects such as the National Park Service cataloging of the Lyman maritime library collection; a fire suppression system for the new National Maritime Museum library; the Maritime Humanities Center's 1983 Festival of the Sea; the University of California's establishment of a Chester W. Nimitz visiting lectureship; the Port of Oakland's restoration of the presidential yacht *Potomac*; the Federal District Court Historical Society's traveling exhibit of significant admiralty cases; the Tiburon Landmarks Society's restoration of the *China Cabin*; the City and County of San Francisco's 1982 and 1983 Fleet Week festivities; the *Jeremiah O'Brien*'s cathodic hull protection and restoration of the domestic refrigeration system, as well as a number of other grants. The Association looks forward to continuing this program and solicits proposals that fit within the above guidelines.

The Association continues as a cooperating Association to the National Park Service in the operation of the historic sailing vessel *Balclutha* located at Pier 43, Fisherman's Wharf. Funds from the admissions are administered by the Association for the use of the National Park Service at the National Maritime Museum. We are looking forward to a continuing relationship with the NPS and assisting with their maritime efforts.

Coming in the SEA LETTER

C.A. Thayer went to drydock on October 12 for major repairs, including new masts and bowsprit, and partial replanking on the starboard side. Marine Maintenance Foreman Steve Hastings has been overseeing the work and keeping careful photographic documentation of each activity. The Spring *SEA LETTER* will be devoted to this exciting undertaking.

The National Park System Advisory Board and Council met October 27 - 28 in Yosemite National Park after touring Golden Gate National Recreation Area earlier that week. Among the more important sites visited was the steam schooner *Wapama*, then on a floating drydock in Oakland. After reviewing this historic property, the Board recommended that she be designated a National Historic Landmark; we hope the next issue of the *SEA LETTER* will carry the official announcement. *C. A. Thayer* was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1971 with attendant formal dedication ceremonies. The Museum looks forward to developing an appropriate dedication program honoring *Wapama*.

In April, 1983, David Nelson was appointed to the newly created position of Assistant to the President where he continues to provide guidance and counsel to Board President Thomas B. Crowley as well as to the Association's new Executive Director William J. Whalen.

Mr. Whalen brings much talent to the job from his experience as General Superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and later as Director of the National Park Service.

The Association hopes to concentrate on increasing memberships in 1984. In addition to free admission to *Balclutha* and *Pampanito* and a 10% discount on purchases made at our Gift Shop, the National Maritime Museum Association and the National Park Service will be providing a quarterly *SEA LETTER* to all members. The support of our membership is extremely important to the strength and continuation of our maritime preservation efforts.

The Chief Curator, Karl Kortum, and the Staff of the National Maritime Museum, and
the Trustees and Staff of the National Maritime Museum Association
wish you Joy and Peace through the Holiday Season and in the year ahead . . .

National Maritime Museum Association

Thomas B. Crowley, *President*
Donald Doyle, *Vice President*
Thomas K. Procter, *Vice President*
Joseph C. Houghteling, *Treasurer*
Robert E. Blake, *Secretary*

Trustees

Neil Chaitin
Howard Chapman
Kingston Cole
Jack Davis
Mrs. Marriner Eccles
Mrs. Elizabeth Gatov

Mark Scott Hamilton, Esq.
Robert H. Langner
D. N. Lillevand
Robert Mayer
Brian O'Neill
John R. Page
Stanley Powell, Jr.
John G. Rogers
Norman Scott
Conway B. Sonne
M. S. Wasacz
Fred Waterhouse, Jr.
Donald Watson

Trustees Emeritus

J. R. Dant
Mario Grossetti
Edward H. Harms
Joseph A. Moore, Jr.
Scott Newhall
William Roth

William J. Whalen, *Executive Director*
David Nelson, *Assistant to the President*
B. V. Gatov, *Business Manager*
Nevin N. Andersen, *Controller*
Mark O. Kasanin, Esq., *Counsel*